16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Climate

821 Whether or not the steamer calls at Inis Beag, especially during the winter months when severe storms are frequent, is of considerable psychological significance. The importance of weather conditions as they impinge, both directly and [182] indirectly, on this tiny island far out in the ocean cannot be overemphasized. Most [521] activities, and not only farming and fishing, are more or less affected by the [676] climate, and the past, present, and future states of the weather figure prominently in conversations among the folk. It is customary for individuals when meeting to talk first of the weather before turning to other matters, and some of the common greetings pertain to immediate conditions: "It is raining.", "It is windy.", or "It is a beautiful day." These are usually the phrases first mastered by non-Gaelic speakers who spend time in Inis Beag, along with the most used greeting—"God bless you." and its reply, "God and Mary bless you."

132 The year around climate of Inis Beag might be labeled cool, humid, rainy, [127] and windy, at least by one living in the Great Lakes region of the United States. A perusal of lighthouse records for the decade 1951 to 1960 revealed a mean temperature of 42 degrees (all figures Fahrenheit) for the winter months, December to March, and 59 degrees for the summer ones, June to September. During that decade, the lowest and highest temperatures recorded in Inis Beag, both during 1955, were 28 and 80 degrees respectively. January was the coldest month, with a mean temperature of 39 degrees, and July was the warmest, with 61 degrees. The island is located in a climatic zone in which the average rainfall is 40 to 50 inches per year; the average number of rain days per year is 225, and the average June sun hours per day is five and a half.

> Westerly winds predominate in Ireland, though naturally a climate experiencing the passage of so many depressions has winds from every quarter at some time during the year . . . Winds of gale force are most frequent in the northwest, where they average 40 per year . . . Most of the gales are from a westerly direction: they are so severe a menace to shipping that many inhabitants of [137] islands and remote coastal districts . . . profit from periodic salvage hauls . . . The absence of trees on the exposed western coasts of Ireland is usually regarded as a direct result of the exposure to westerly winds . . . (Freeman 1960:50–51).

Snow usually falls several times during the winter, but it melts within hours as the temperature seldom fails to climb above freezing on any day. During the months from June to August, the sea and air are often warm enough to encourage 821 "comfortable" swimming by tourists, usually off the strand. The islanders consider May the ideal month so far as climate is concerned, for the weather tends to be cool, dry, and windy; flowers grow in profusion and birds return in great numbers. March weather, which is much colder but also dry and windy, is called "hard."

All of the adults of Inis Beag are amateur weather forecasters; however, [815] several old men are considered to be specialists in the art. Some households possess [207] barometers, and forecasts on the radio are listened to attentively by those who own sets. But, in the main, the folk prefer to make their own prognostications based on traditional signs, most of which are sound meteorologically and the outgrowth of

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

779
114 The role of the church in Irish history has been well documented, albeit often in a biased manner because of the prejudices of certain historians, but its role in shaping Irish culture and personality has been little examined. Irish social scientists either have been oblivious to it because of being Catholics themselves, or have been fearful of the political and religious consequences were they to pursue and publish the "truth;" foreign scientists, on the other hand, have shown little interest in Ireland, or have suppressed their data on religious influences in order to be able to return there to do further research.

779
• 815 Whereas in developing countries anthropologists are being restricted increasingly by elitists sensitive to the primitive conditions in their nations which are being studied and publicized by scientists, in Ireland similar reactions of nativists, including those who are in the government, are compounded by those of the church. The resistance of the church to objective scrutiny in large measure explains the absence of ethnology—with its emphasis on such values as empiricism, naturalism, relativism, and pluralism—as a discipline in the national universities. Irish scholars have tended to stress economic and other monistic causes (especially climate, race, English oppression, the famine, and loss of the Irish tongue) in their
[123] analyses of culture and personality phenomena. I have talked with Irish scientists about religious forces as aspects of particular phenomena, and have been told that to acknowledge certain of these in print would be to commit job suicide.
[122] When I have discussed with them my own conclusions about factors accounting for such conditions in Inis Beag as celibacy, late marriage, personality disorders, and emigration, and have cited religious causes as among the most significant ones, my listeners have agreed tacitly and changed the subject, or have remained silent. Irish scientists visiting the United States, I might add, usually endorse my views but often ask not to be quoted abroad or in print. Religious causes are, in fact, so important and pervasive that one runs the risk of being declared a "religious determinist" if he deals objectively with his materials.

793 The bishop and the parish priest in theory direct the actions of the curate in Inis Beag, but it is believed by the folk that their control over him in reality is only nominal, and that he often is able to make and carry out major decisions affecting the welfare of the islanders without consulting his superiors. His supposed freedom of action is reflected in the commonly voiced complaint that if word of his secular "excesses" were to reach the bishop, he would be reprimanded or replaced. However, some say that his policies are known and secretly approved
[123] of by his superiors. It is rumored that I was responsible for the replacement of a curate by complaining of his opposition to my research and certain of his excesses to mainlanders who had the "ear of the bishop."

779
793
795
181
[789]
[795] The folk are devoutly Catholic, despite the fact that they are extremely critical of their priests and retain and reinterpret pagan religious forms. They are proud of their strength of belief, with its attendant morality, and of the sanctity of "Inis Beag of the Saints," and they look to the curate for spiritual comfort, as well as political guidance in several spheres, and are uncomfortable in his absence. His presence, it is believed, provides supernatural protection for the island, while his absence invites possible anti-social behavior, and harm to the soul of one who

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

114 155 troversial novels use the Oedipus complex as a focus. *Michael Joe*, by William Murray, examines the role of the emasculating Irish mother, and John McGahern, in *The Dark*, probes the conflict between father and son so characteristic of Irish society.

114 One of the most penetrating studies of this sociocultural configuration, which has such momentous psychological consequences, is that of Marvin Opler and Jerome Singer, conducted among first, second, and third generation Irish male schizophrenic patients in New York hospitals. The intent of these social scientists was to determine how psychotic syndromes are culturally patterned. For a year they observed their respondents to obtain total psychiatric, anthropological, and psychological profiles. Their observations included ward scrutiny, interviews, the collection of life histories and case histories, and the administration of thirteen tests, among them the Rorschach, Thematic Apperception, Sentence Completion, and Porteus Maze. The investigators conclude that there is a continuity of Irish (and Italian) culture and personality forms among immigrants for at least three generations; their psychological findings are buttressed by research data collected in Irish and English mental institutions. My wife and I visited one of these hospitals and [12] interviewed several Irish psychiatrists both there and in America. Our own conclusions support many of those reported by Opler, Singer, and * 831 15 [593] the psychiatrists interviewed.[6] Opler and Singer have the following to say about the Oedipus complex in Ireland:

> Normative cultural standards led to the hypothesis that the central female figure in the Irish family, the mother, could instil primary anxiety and fear toward female figures. . . . This hypothesis grew out of anthropological observations that the central figure in Irish families is more likely to be a controlling figure on the distaff side, while fathers, especially in straitened economic circumstances, are frequently by contrast shadowy and evanescent. [58] . . . An Irish male patient beset with anxiety and fear of female figures [838] early in life, and lacking possibilities of firm male identification with a father, would later experience the sexual repressions and socio-religious definitions of marriage and sexuality for which his culture, with its high celibacy rates, protracted engagements, and sin-guilt emphases, is justly famous. . . . all this spells a final anxious and fearful lack of positive sexual

[6] [815] [779] Irish psychiatrists in that country, England, and America are often reticent about discussing sex. Psychiatric theory in Ireland is modified by Catholic dogma, and specialists are influenced in writings, therapy, and discussions by subtle religious and political forces, as well as by their own character structure shaped by the Irish milieu. One psychologist, well acquainted with psychiatry in Ireland, dubbed much of it "Freud with clothes on."